

'I drew strength from our unborn child'

Married life had only just started for Vicky Whipps, 28, when it was suddenly and cruelly over. It's taken nearly three years – and a little miracle – but she has found the strength to rebuild

I discovered I was pregnant with my son, James, two weeks after my husband Craig died in a farming accident. I was scared – how could I cope as a single, bereaved mum with two small children? We hadn't even been trying for another baby, although Craig had been desperate for a brother for our daughter, Bethany, who was then a year old. But as the months passed, I drew strength from our unborn child. When I gave birth in March 2012, it felt desperately unfair that Craig would never see his son, but I was so, so grateful for all the joy James brought to our grieving families, as well as to me. My two children wrenched me back into life. I'm not a religious person, but I felt our miracle baby was a gift from Craig.

I didn't know anyone else in my situation – widowed at 25 – and I found lots of people didn't know what to say to me. So I decided to contact the Widowed And Young Foundation for support, and tentatively started chatting online. It helped so much to speak to people who knew exactly how I felt, to vent my frustration, and realise that I wasn't alone in what I was going through, I wasn't crazy. When I went out for my first meal with my local WAY group, doing something as simple as putting on make-up reminded me I could feel normal again.

Grief has changed me. I used to be very timid, but I'm much stronger now – I've had to be. I felt so angry about Craig's death that I've become an ambassador for the National Farmers Union's safety campaign. A few years ago there's no way I would have put myself in the spotlight, but now I look beyond myself and if I can do anything to stop this tragedy happening to another family, I will do it.

I used to get tired of people telling me that time's a healer, but it turned out to be true. I will always love Craig and I will always bring the children to Daddy's special garden where he's buried, where we can chat to him. For a long time after he died, whenever I tried to imagine the future I just saw blankness. But I know he wouldn't want me to put my life on hold for ever. I'm now in a new relationship, and I've started tutoring secondary school students. I have learnt to grab life and make every second count. I know it can be very short.'

WHAT I KNOW NOW

'Finding the group Widowed And Young (widowedandyoung.org.uk) gave me a reason to get out of the house. Speaking to people online first meant I wasn't so nervous when we met, and making new friends helped me to feel sane again.'

